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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1895.

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## AN HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE SCIENCE OF MECHANICS.\*

OUR age is at once the age of excessive specialization and the age of excessive popularization of science. Every smallest field of scientific activity has its gleaners and classifiers and builders of technical terminology. The workers in each field proceed, as a rule, without much regard to the inter-

ests and objects of the workers in adjoining fields, and it may easily happen that the precise and lucid, if not romantic, literature current in one field will be well-nigh unintelligible in another. So far, indeed, has this specialization gone that the various classes of specialists have but little common ground on which to meet, and it is sometimes difficult, if not impossible, for them to dwell together in peace and harmony. In a general scientific assembly, for example, the naturalists feel great uneasiness in listening to a paper from a mathematician or physicist, while the latter are almost certain to seek relief in the open air from the depression induced in them by the wealth of terminology essential to the description of a new species. The general public, on the other hand, busy though it be with multifarious affairs, is quick to appreciate the results of science and eager to know how they have been attained. To meet this legitimate demand for information, scientific and pseudo-scientific men have given us a flood of popular literature explaining almost every discovery, principle, theory, and speculation known to scientific thought. Nay more, and worse, this popularization has gone so far that many have come to think that the royal road to learning has been found ; that it is only necessary, in fact, to acquire a little of the technical terminology, to read a few books, and to witness a few pyrotechnic experiments to come into possession of

\*Address delivered by Professor R. S. Woodward, at a meeting of the New York Academy of Sciences, November 26, 1894.